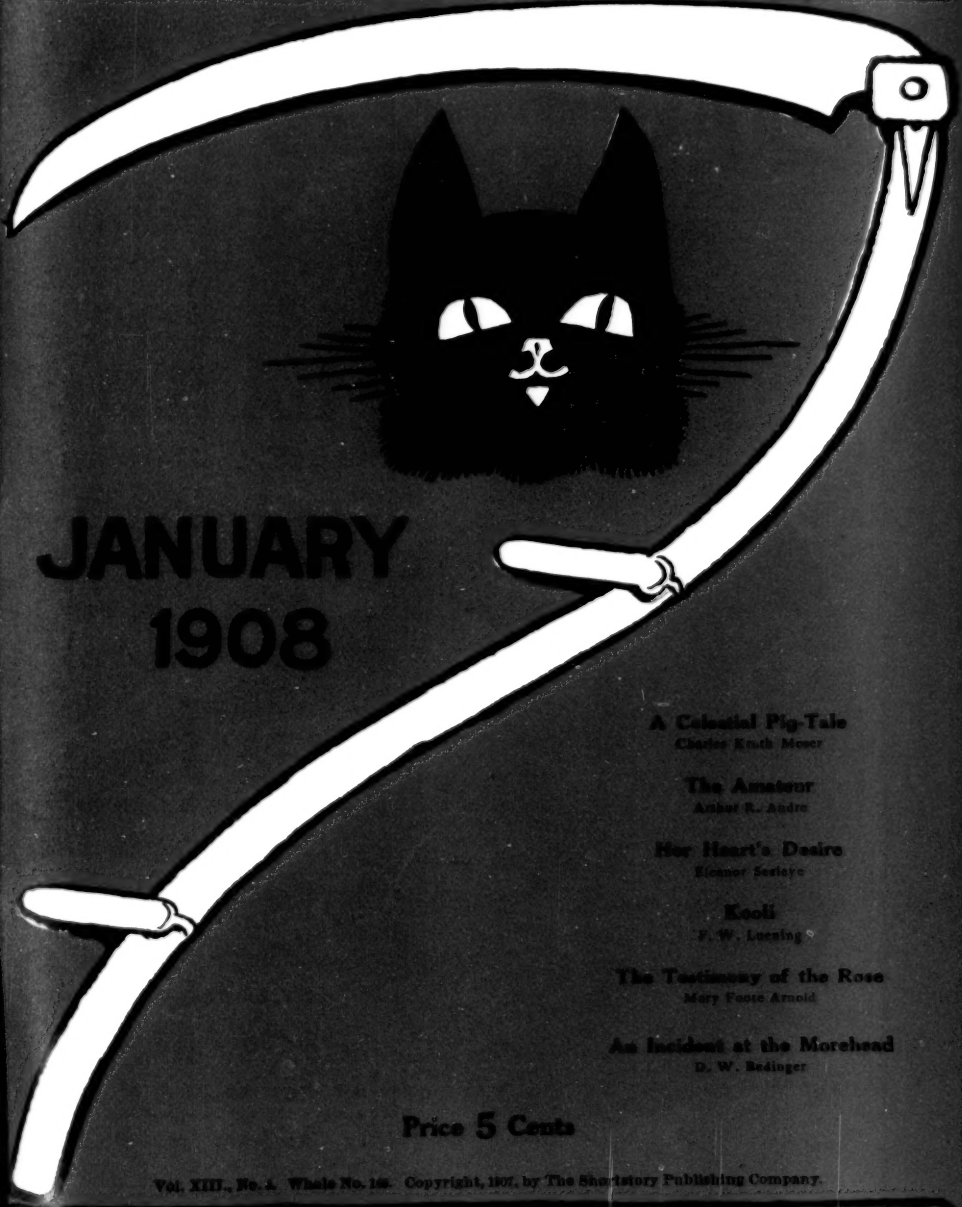
The Black Cat



JANUARY
1908

A Celestial Pig-Tale
Charles Keith Moser

The Amateur
Ambar R. Andre

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Eleanor Seeley

Kooli
F. W. Lunning

The Testimony of the Rose
Mary Foote Arnold

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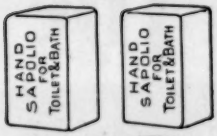

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The Black Cat

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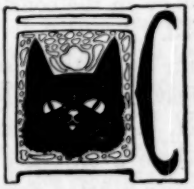
A Celestial Pig-Tale.*

BY CHARLES KROTH MOSER.



CHAN TU-TSUNG, the exalted President of the great Chinese Six Companies and the foremost man of his nation on American soil, sat in his reception hall awaiting the coming of a Prince of China.

Yesterday two envoys of the Prince's suite had entered his residence and announced that one of the mighty ones—a noble of the realm—had made a special visit to the land of the Stars and Stripes for the sole purpose of bearing a message from omnipotent Kwang-Su, Emperor of China and Son of Heaven, to the unworthy Chan Tu-Tsung. The Prince would present himself and the message today. It was a most notable occasion, one that comes even to the great but once in a lifetime.

Chan Tu-Tsung had arrayed himself for the meeting in magnificence. He sat in a huge gilded chair and his long flowing gown of purple silk, embroidered with golden dragons and pink-colored peach blossoms, reached to his shoes of inlaid silver. A gorgeous cap with two golden wings spread-eagled above his ears and surmounted by the red button, indicative of his rank, ornamented his clean-shaven head. Brilliant butterflies of opalescent

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silk danced lightly along his queue. His prodigiously long finger-nails, curved like the blades of reaping sickles, were covered with rings and chains of flashing jewels. Chan Tu-Tsung was a dream of oriental gaudiness.

A shadow of perplexity was spread over the usually mirth-making features of the exalted President as he sat awaiting the coming of the Prince. The fat little eyes were bridged together with a frown, the corners of the mobile mouth were drawn down, and over the curving nether lip the sensitive tip of the long upper one hung pendulous. Chan Tu-Tsung had the reputation among his people of being a born humorist — his jokes were the life of his friends. He could boil a screaming puppy in fish oil and wring tears of laughter out of his eyes at its agonized antics. He could cast the red bean that made his first cousin a chopping block for the hatchets of the tongman with many a droll jest over the surprise in store for his relative's family. He had a very pretty wit, — he took life as the ancient jester took history in the courts of the king, and he enjoyed every minute he lived.

But this visit of the Prince did not strike him as anything so very funny. Why should Kwang-Su, Son of Heaven, so signally honor him? True, he was a good, loyal subject, and had never foresworn his allegiance to the Emperor to become a citizen of the white pigs' nation — as had many of his craven-hearted associates. And it was true that he had done much good for his race by assisting thousands of his less worthy countrymen to slip through the holes in the laws of the Americans to positions of importance and wealth. . . . Also, by a crafty use of gold-dust, he had many times blinded the eyes of the immigration people, so that slave girls had passed close by and they had not seen. This was his greatest triumph. Yes, it was true some of the white pigs had squealed about this, and the preacher-women up at the mission had made much pow-wow with the State Department at Washington. The State Department had said some very sharp things to Minister Wu Ting Fang and the Minister had called in the President of the Six Companies and reviled the ancestry of his mother for thirty-six generations back — and winked the other eye. So, of course, that bit of unpleasantness was a thing of the past.

But what, then, could it be? Perhaps emoluments, privileges and cash, perhaps higher rank and a new office, perhaps a title of nobility! Reward, of course — or, perhaps? . . . Yes, men have been known to die through the Emperor's too great kindness!

"It is one too many for me!" Chan Tu-Tsung soliloquized in very unclassical Chinese. "But I would that His Nobleness the Prince were drinking Sam-shu with Kwang-Su today instead of tea with me. I am very happy as I am."

A chubby pig-tailed office boy announced the approach of the distinguished visitor, and Chan set his face in solemn lines.

The Prince came unattended, which seeming breach in the laws of official etiquette portended to the sagacious President both secrecy and importance. Chan kowtowed reverently, touching his forehead nine times to the floor. The Prince gravely shook hands with himself for five minutes, and the two great personages were introduced.

The little office boy placed a pearl-inlaid table between them and set it with a tea service of solid gold. Chan poured the steaming beverage and the two dignitaries drank many cups, while the boy went into the back yard to practice knife-throwing at a kitten.

When the tea drinking was accomplished, solicitous inquiries exchanged concerning the state of each other's honorable health, and the small-talk upon the perfection of the august weather had languished, the Prince drew from the bosom of his yellow-hued gown a billet of vellum, bearing the emblem of the dragon rampant and the imperial arms of China. The document was of the thinnest, finest texture and addressed to the august Chan Tu-Tsung, President of the Six Companies, in characters of gold, and stamped with the royal seal. The Prince kissed the missive as though it were the hand of his sovereign, and then decorously presented it to Chan.

Chan pressed it to his forehead, performed the kissing game nine times, then broke the seal. He read:

OUR DEAR RELATIVE:

It is our pleasure that you depart as speedily as possible from this life for the realms of heaven, that our throne may be greatly glorified and the peace of our subjects more assured. To make easy your departure we send you a bottle of wine.

Your dear cousin,

KWANG-SU (Emperor).

Chan folded the billet with reverent fingers, kissed it again and carefully tucked it into his bosom. He smiled blandly at the Prince.

"Where is the bottle of wine, Highness?" he asked, whimsically.

The imperial messenger drew from his voluminous sleeve a crystal flagon, encrusted with silver; through the interstices of the filagree, the wine glowed ruby-red like the warm blood of a maiden's heart. The President accepted the flagon from his hand and drew out the silver stopper.

"It is a very handsome present," he said appreciatively.

He raised the decanter to his nose and solemnly sniffed.

"It hath the lethal odor of hemlock mingled with the fragrance of the grape. It is a most delicious bouquet, but a bitter draught, withal," he said, smiling again like a child pleased with a new toy.

The Prince bowed gravely and rubbed his hands together unctiously. Chan Tu-Tsung transfixed him by two streams of penetrating light from his cunning little slits of eyes — transfixed him as a beetle is impaled on pins, and the Highness squirmed.

"Thou knowest, O Mighty One, that His Glorious Majesty, Kwang-Su, Son of Heaven, hath deigned to honor me by commanding that I efface my unworthy self from the world of living things. Dost thou also know why this thing is his pleasure?"

"It is not given to my vileness to know the secrets of my illustrious Emperor nor to thee, most renowned Chan Tu-Tsung, to enquire the cause of his will. But if it will minister to the greater content of thy soul I may tell thee that in thy administration of His Majesty's affairs in America thou hast been indiscreet. Because of the slavewomen, thou hast brought down the wrath of this government upon the sacred heads of His Majesty and his ministers, and they have been much put to it to make lies proving thee innocent of sin. Thy sleeves have not hidden the workings of thy hands. There is need of a new President with great wisdom and much cunning in his fingers; that the Dragon may not grovel again in the dust under the feet of the Eagle. Would thou that I should say more?"

"No more, illustrious Prince. It is the will of His Celestial Majesty that I should drink this wine of hemlock and I am honored in my death at his noble command. Let me give thanks and honor to His Celestial Majesty for this proof of his love, and I pray that his reign may be long and glorious."

Once more Chan dropped on his knees to the floor and pressed his forehead nine times against the matting. The Prince stood over him:

"I and all my suite will attend thy funeral ceremony," he said, "that thou may be buried with the honors due thy glorious death. Also that I may report to my divine master that his wishes have been accomplished."

"O august Highness, thou art too generous, and my vile carcass is unworthy of thy graciousness," declared Chan. "My sons and my grandsons shall make vows to thee for thy greatness."

They drank more tea, shook hands with themselves, and the doomed President bowed his noble visitor out with profound assurances of his happiness.

For many minutes Chan Tu-Tsung sat alone with his thoughts. At first his brow wore a puzzled cast, then it smoothed into a tranquil expression and a smile lurked now and then in his eyes. He lighted a taper cigarette and filled the room with clouds of heavy-scented smoke. Occasionally his round yellow face swelled into a huge bubble of noiseless laughter, like the moon when it is too full for utterance. It was evident that Chan's thoughts tickled his oriental fancy immensely.

At last he pulled a red-tasselled cord hanging against the wall and a bell tinkled in the back yard. The pig-tailed boy came in, wiping his gory knife blade on the seat of his breeches.

"Thou tiny imp of the feng-shui, (earth devils)" said the dignitary good-humoredly, "send to me my first-born, with whom I would speak privately."

When his son entered, the old man dawdled long with him over the ceremonious cups of tea and smoked three cigarettes. He said no word, and of course the younger man dared not speak first. At last the elder Chan drew out of his bosom the Emperor's message and handed it to the youth, saying:

"O my son, Chan Wo-Soy, thou art wise for thy years and

hast much knowledge from the teachers of the white pigs. What dost thou think of this?"

Chan Wo-Soy read the message through twice and looked thoughtfully into the bottom of his teacup.

"Surely my illustrious sire hath no thought to carry out the hard commands of Kwang-Su? His Celestial Majesty is many thousands of miles from the abode of my father."

"Yea, but his Prince is here to attend the funeral. And, know thee, that since the first Emperor was begotten of the loins of the sun no man of his kingdom has ever yet dared disobey this command. Besides, there is the penalty; if I disobey this honorable order the slaves of His Majesty will carry me in chains to Peking. In the public street my head will be hewn from my body with a pole-axe and they will hang my carcass on the city walls to feed the carrion-eaters. Also, thou and thy sons and thy grandsons, even to the fourth generation, will be outcasts, for beggars and women to spit upon."

The younger man pondered. The wily mind of the oriental was tugging at the problem with the trained force of the occident.

"If thou wert but a citizen of America the mighty Kwang-Su would not dare——" he ventured suggestively.

Chan Tu-Tsung's oily skin broke into mirthful creases. "Thou art a very wizard and hast spitted the heart of the thing with thy first lunge," he chuckled. "In one week I shall be an unfeathered birdling in the nest of the American eagle; the white Jew lawyer on Kearny Street shall easily see to that when he beholds the gold-money shining between his fingers. . . . But between now and then I must die and the Prince see my corpse on the carriage of the dead — for such is our gracious Emperor's decree." The old man's chuckles increased to a roll of soft laughter.

"Listen thou, first-born of my flesh, and I will tell to thee my thoughts and thou shalt give thy father thy help that he may snap his fingers in the beard of Kwang-Su and put a shame upon his ape-faced Prince."

Father and son put their heads together in earnest counsel. According to custom the funeral torches must blaze over the bier of Chan Tu-Tsung within the next twenty-four hours. What was to be done must be done quickly. The pair talked solemnly at

first, but as the father continued to unroll his scheme Chan Wo-Soy began to twist about in his chair with ill-suppressed laughter. When the old man, as unblinking as an owl, reached the climax to his plot, Chan Soy suddenly fell at his father's feet and exclaimed in admiration:

"Already thou art a new-hatched chick of the Yankee eaglet, O most illustrious sire, for thou dost make a marvelous joke of the sacred things and dost put great mockeries on them that sit in high places!"

"When one's neck lies under the shadow of the noose he must laugh at the hangman if his brains would save his bones," replied his father. "But do thou see to the house and attend also to the business with Quong Fat, the butcher. Instruct him that he dress it with skill that neither form nor taint be suspicious. And forget not to arrange matters carefully with Li Pochee, the undertaker. Cross their palms well with yen and hang gold pieces over their eyes; afterwards our faithful *po tautsi* (hatchetmen) will stop up their mouths with dust. . . I go to buy my papers of citizenship from the Jew lawpreacher and his honorable friend, the white pigs' Judge."

Chan Tu-Tsung announced the glad tidings of his approaching demise to the members of his family and the sub-heads of the Six Companies with grave simplicity. They kowtowed nine times on hearing this pleasing news. The august condescension of the Emperor was an honor to be received with due appreciation.

After an elaborate *chow* (dinner) of roasted duck and blood gruel, with much Sam-shu, the great man bade adieu to his beloved ones with many shakings of hands and good wishes bidding him god-speed to the realms of glory. Then, accompanied by his first-born and the bottle of hemlock-tinctured wine, he repaired to the Chamber of Tranquillity in Li Pochee's undertaking parlors. No true Chinese gentleman ever dies in his own home, if he can help it—he wishes to save his family that unpleasantness. He betakes himself to the Chamber of Tranquillity, drinks his medicine and dies with his boots on. Or, if he is doomed by disease and his malady be a lingering one, the kind-hearted undertaker obligingly assists him to shuffle off this mortal coil. Sometimes a little piece of rope deftly twisted around the neck will do the trick.

The elder Chan and his son lingered long in Li Pochee's parlors. Now that everything was arranged there was no great hurry. Much of the time the two sat on a marble slab and smoked cigarettes. Once they tried the effect of the hemlock wine on an invading cat. It worked like a charm. Afterwards they poured the rest of the contents of the flagon into the sewer and sent the cat along too. The son retained the crystal vessel as an interesting souvenir.

Towards the Hour of the Rat, when all Chinatown drowses in the sweet slumber of innocence, Quong Fat, the butcher, and the undertaker brought in a huge black box, long enough to hold a man. A large wagon with drawn curtains, like the "Black Maria" of the police department, stood in the alley behind Li Pochee's establishment. A form, cold and heavy, was removed from the box and laid on the marble slab where Chan and young Chan had been smoking cigarettes.

Half an hour later the butcher and the undertaker helped Chan Wo-Soy lift the black box into the curtained wagon. Chan Tu-Tsung had disappeared.

The undertaker bound a thick silk handkerchief over the butcher's eyes and helped him in beside the box. The son of the old man took the reins and drove as quietly as possible far out through the streets of the city until he reached a suburb more than half way to the Chinese cemetery near Colma.

At a desolate-looking wooden house, standing apart from its fellows, and suggesting in its forlorn aspect that all mankind had forgotten it, young Chan reined in his horses. The butcher, whose movements were hindered by the lack of his eyesight, helped him drag the box through the door. He left the box in the hallway, locked the door with a large brass key and drove the blindfolded butcher back to Chinatown.

At dawn the young man stood in the presence of his mother, the several wives of his father, his brothers and the leaders of the Six Companies.

"Our illustrious father is no more," he said. "His soul has gone to join the shades of his mighty ancestors and his cold body lies under the cerements of the dead in Li Pochee's Chamber of Tranquillity."

All Chinatown joined in the funeral ceremonies over the body of Chan Tu-Tsung.

Before the morning sun had climbed half way to the zenith the Tao Sze (Taoist Priest) of the Golden Rose stood in the chamber where the dead lay, singing the soul of the mighty one to sleep. The body lay on a marble slab under a cherry-colored robe. No hand was allowed to lift the shroud lest the lurking devils creep under, unseen, and pollute the body. At the feet Chan Wo-Soy, the mourning son, placed spirit lamps and ignited the sacred incense. While surging thousands thronged outside, the customary funeral service of the high-born Chinese proceeded in the chamber. Only the family, a few intimate cronies among the great ones, and the Prince with his suite, were allowed to witness it.

Chan Wo-Soy, clad all in mourning garments of white with a coarse tunic of brown grass-fibre over him as a protection against the wily feng-shui that always hover around the dead, knelt at the feet of the body and said his prayers. Between the kneeling boy and the corpse a small porcelain bowl filled with earth was placed; in it candles twinkled, incense glowed, and clouds of smoke arose from burning pieces of fragrant sandal and camphor wood.

The priest, his head inclined forward until the golden rose on his cap pointed with its crimson-tipped petals toward the lifeless form, struck a soft-toned gong and began to chant the lullaby of the departed spirit. The words and the voice were plaintive, resigned, full of hope and tinged with mystery. Accompanying the song were the weird cacophonous celestial inharmonies of the Chui-tek Kei Yan (musicians) who stood at the head and breathed strange vapors through their wooden instruments.

As a storm-swept spirit would swirl and swing through the dark, so the music rose and fell, sinking into whispers too soft to disturb a sleeper of the living, then wildly soaring to screaming heights as though to wake the dead.

At a sign from the priest the members of the family, the Prince, in his gown of violet with its white trappings, and those who had sipped the wine of brotherhood many times with Chan Tu-Tsung in his lifetime, approached the covered form to bid it adieu. Each

one bowed, shook hands with himself three times and in murmured whispers bade the hidden clay good luck. Then they all filed out, according as it is written it should be, that the first-born son may stand alone and make his farewell to the dead.

The undertakers came in with the casket while Chan Wo Soy yet stood in an attitude of devotion over the body; they lifted the form from the marble slab and placed it in its coffin. Then, averting their eyes that none might rob the son of his right to look last upon the face under the cherry robe, one of them uncovered the head.

A Chinaman can, when need be, harden his face into the stone visage of a Sphinx. But when Chan Soy caught sight of the countenance gazing at him from under the robe, his features broke into spasmodic twitching like a bartender with the jim-jams. He had to sob violently to keep from screaming with laughter. If the thing in the coffin were indeed illustrious Chan Tu-Tsung, then his features were marvelously changed; only the fat, puffy jowls and the sunken slits of eyes with their pig-like vacuity of expression might have suggested him. Chan Soy could only howl bitterly, which is strange conduct from a zinc-lined heathen, to hide his real emotions. The undertakers thought him a very devoted son as they screwed the lid down over the corpse's face.

Pallbearers carried the casket out into the street and set it on trestles before the door of the temple. Here was held the public service. A canopy of silk of violet hue, the color of death, was erected into a pavilion over the heads of the priest and the chief mourners. Goats, roasted whole with the head and horns left on, young suckling pigs and broiled chickens, rice cakes and spitted ducks, together with fish, wine and many other lighter viands, were placed on tables beside the casket, for the sustenance of the dead soul during its long voyage to the fairy islands. All the people who had known the late departed in the flesh then came forward and, kneeling on mats around the bier, received from the hands of the priest a small cup of Sam-shu. This they poured upon the ground to wet the lips of those who had already turned to dust. Each one shook hands with himself, bowed to the earth and cried in a voice of lamentation:

"Yat lo peng on!" (A peaceful journey, O soul!)

Then the casket was placed in a hearse drawn by six black horses and, amid the smoke of incense, the blazing of red papers scrawled with prayers, and the banging of tomtoms, the clay was started towards its resting place under the mother sod. The goats, the chickens, and the piles of sacred foods were put in a wagon also, to be burned beside the grave. To deceive the evil spirits as to the real direction in which the funeral cortége was to move, it was headed first in the opposite way, coming at last by detours to the true route.

The procession was headed by a hardy-lunged American band in full regalia of green and gold. Its lusty brasses whanged out in loudest tones such funereal airs as "There'll be a Hot Time," "Dixie," "Darkies on Parade," "We Won't Go Home Till Morning," and such other surpassingly sad melodies as its Irish drum major saw fit to select.

Following that came the hearse, the cart of funeral meats and the carriage of Chan Wo-Soy, the mourning son.

The Prince, having done his duty by both his Emperor and his victim by attending the chamber service and the public ceremony under the pavilion, withdrew his suite from the mourning gathering and returned to the hotel. His mission accomplished, he only awaited the next steamer to return to the smiling fields of the Flowery Kingdom.

Behind the son a long line of carriages strung out, with here and there a loud popping of firecrackers from among them. Those evil spirits which refused to flee before the bursting of the mimic bombs had to crawl through all the tiny holes in small bamboo sticks the mourners scattered along the way.

Half way to the cemetery Chan Soy glanced up toward the windows of an old frame house which stood forlornly apart from its fellows. A red handkerchief hung out of a shattered window pane, fluttering gayly in the breeze, and Chan Soy was again seized with a violent sobbing spell. The funeral train proceeded to the cemetery without further incident.

High up on the brow of the hill where the evening sun, falling to rest upon the Pacific's heaving breast, may kiss the dreamless sleepers "Good night!" the grave-diggers began to ply their tools as soon as the priest arrived to chase away the feng-shui. With

every upturned clod the mourners flung into the cavity a bowl of Sam-shu to slake the thirst of lips now crumbled into dust. When all was ready for the lowering of the coffin the priest began his weird chanting, the musicians tortured their instruments of catgut and brass and wood into fresh agonies, and the relatives heaped up a bonfire of the dead man's cast-off clothes.

Then, as the sun fell behind the green crests of the ocean and cast one long, lingering, golden gleam over the hillsides where the dead lay so softly, the priest murmured the final words:

"Dust thou wert, to dust thou hast returned, O glorious one! May thy mighty soul find sweet eternal peace in the fairy isles of Nirvana!"

Above the grave the flames crackled over the consuming foods; a final chorus of yowls from the Chui-tek Kei Yan, and the planting of the dead was accomplished. At a slow trot the procession wended its way back to the quarter.

In the evening Chan Wo-Soy went out again to the untenanted house. He went in a closed hack and he took with him bowls of rice, chicken, a teapot, and several bottles of the choicest Sam-shu. Climbing the tottering stairway in the darkness, he carried his armsful of provisions to a room in the back hall and opened a door.

Chan Tu-Tsung, — late President of the great Chinese Six Companies and, by the decree of Kwang-Su, Son of Heaven, dead and buried hours ago in the Colma hills — was sitting calmly upon a long black box playing solitaire with a pack of greasy cards. A tallow candle standing on the floor threw a soft light over his placid yellow face.

Not until the door was securely locked did the two men give themselves up to unrestrained merriment. Then they fell over each other in unholy joy — as heathen might, but seldom do.

"By my grandmother's back teeth," cackled the old man, "if his turkey-strutting Princeship could but know that today he profoundly paid his funeral devotions to the carcass of a hog!" Tears of mirth rolled down his fat cheeks.

"O worthy sire, when I saw the pig's long snout and slashing tusks grinning there where *thou* wert thought to be, I bit my tongue till the blood ran lest I should laugh," cried Chan Soy.

Two days after the departure of the Prince for the realms of

His Celestial Majesty Kwan Su, there was a panic in Chinatown. Men, little boys and chop-footed women ran screaming through the streets, pig-tails flying, unloosed sandals sailing in all directions like white-soled missiles through clouds of dust. Hats fell off and were trampled under flying feet, but no one stopped to pick them up; baskets, babies and woolly China lapdogs were flung here, there, anywhere — for the devils were at work and one must run for his skin.

For there — coming calmly up the street, smoking a cigarette, was the body of one who must have risen from the dead. Had they not, all of them, witnessed with their two eyes his funeral ceremonies before the temple door not a week ago? And now here *it* was coolly walking about in a blue blouse and green satin breeches.

Truly, it was the work of the devil!

The pudgy, nonchalant figure stepped softly into the Taoist temple and stood smiling at the gray-haired priest of the Golden Rose. The ancient ecclesiastic fell in a heap on the floor.

When he thought he felt better he raised his head and summoned all of his faith to combat the evidence before his eyes:

"*Thou* — art Chan Tu-Tsung!" he stammered. The man threw back his head and laughed:

"The father of liars begat thee, ancient temple-bug, and thou art his worthy son. I am Mr. Morning Light, a citizen of the United States of America, and I have come to say my prayers for the soul of a swine. Yea, and to burn a punk to the Emperor."

The Amateur.*

BY ARTHUR R. ANDRE.

"YOU said you wanted to go on the stage, and on you go!"

In vain the little man protested. Relentless fingers loosened his grasp of the canvas scenery, the curtain went up, the orchestra ceased playing, and he was thrust, mute and despairing, before the footlights.

The audience — it was the usual Friday-night crowd at the "Olympia" — rose to the occasion with a yell. Hands, grasping sticks and umbrellas, started up suddenly and appeared to threaten, while shouts of derision, jeers, and cat-calls rent the air. It was the elemental savage breaking loose — a man-hunt, in a modern setting. Even the musicians were affected, and one of them, a trombonist, pointed his instrument to the roof and blew industriously; but the sound, if sound there was, was lost in the din.

Meanwhile, the man on the stage looked stonily around. The agony of fear, the blind, unreasoning terror that had gripped his heart-strings and paralyzed his senses, passed away at last, and left him dazed and weak, incapable of further suffering. He became indifferent, and watched the musician who was leading the demonstration against him. Where had he seen the man before? Then, with a start, he remembered. Despair gave place to astonishment, that in its turn to indignation, and the audience, observing a stage-play which it failed to understand, grew suddenly, tensely silent.

Now was the little man's opportunity. He advanced briskly to the footlights, squared his shoulders, took a deep breath — and to his horror he discovered that he had forgotten every word of his carefully prepared monologue.

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Then everything grew blurred and indistinct. His senses fled, and a sea of faces swirled and eddied and billowed all around him. The familiar features of the trombonist, wreathed in an exasperating smile, served as a pivot around which everything revolved.

His vision cleared again.

A dozen rows from the front, a clerical-looking individual with a benign expression nodded encouragingly, while on the table before him a programme was floating in a lake of beer. Smoke-rings curled lazily upwards here and there, and in the farthest seats the people were craning their necks to listen. If he could only think of something — anything ! Involuntarily he glanced at the trombonist, and the next moment there leaped into his mind an idea which was nothing short of an inspiration. Calmly and collectedly he began:

"Ethan Dale was a clerk in a department store, at a salary of eight dollars a week."

However, the man on the stage found it difficult to keep his wits from wandering. The garish furnishings, the murky air, the silent, listening throng, the waiters gliding about with trays of beer poised skilfully upon extended fingertips — every detail, in fact, of the unfamiliar scene before him impressed itself upon his mind and distracted his thoughts. The words he had just spoken echoed and re-echoed and died away, and were followed by an impatient movement in the audience.

"Of course," he continued, hurriedly, "there were not lacking kind friends who remonstrated with Ethan Dale — who told him that a clerk in a department store, at a salary of eight dollars a week, had no earthly excuse for getting married. But Ethan only smiled. He thought of Marie, of the tiny dwelling to which he hurried every night, of the glorious possibilities of the future; he worked, and dreamed, and studied — and was content. Then, as a gift from the gods, came Tommy." The speaker paused for breath and wiped his forehead with his handkerchief.

"But Tommy was weak and ailing from the moment of his birth, and Ethan got very little sleep during the next few months. The eight dollars a week was little enough, now that there was medicine to be purchased as well as food and clothing; but, as

Ethan explained to Marie, business was increasing at "The Golden Rule"; new departments were being added; and, in consequence, there was always a chance for promotion or a rise in salary.

"Poor Marie! She didn't know how to manage very well at first, and the pretty dresses she had worn before she was married soon grew faded and soiled. She turned them, and reversed them, and furbished them up, as only the wives of the poor know how; and when they were quite hopeless she shed a tear or two in secret, and laid them aside. But she always contrived to have a knot of ribbon in her hair, and a smile on her face, when Ethan came home from work, and she wouldn't have exchanged her husband for the wealthiest man in the world. Then, in next to no time, it seemed, came Dorothy."

A smile appeared upon the faces of the audience.

"Dorothy was fair, like her mother, with blue eyes and a rosebud of a mouth; and eight dollars seemed an absurdly pitiful sum with which to make ends meet, but Marie, who had learned her lesson, managed somehow. And Dorothy was welcome, bless her little heart! as were also the twins, Harry and Fred, who came next; and Helen, and Bobby — eight, all told, including Ethan and Marie, — and all to be supported on eight dollars a week! Ethan began to grow round-shouldered; his hair grew thin on the top; and although he always did his best, was always anxious to please — too anxious, perhaps — the manager of his department began to watch him as a cat watches a mouse, or, rather, as an executioner watches a prospective victim.

"But it would be unfair to Ethan Dale to say that he had no higher desire in life than to be a clerk in a department store. To support his family, he worked twelve long hours a day, and fifteen on Saturdays, for a pittance; but deep down in his heart he cherished a fond ambition — he wanted to go on the stage. Of course he never mentioned this desire to anyone — he was too modest; but by going without lunch three times a week, and by practising other little economies, he managed, in the course of time, to save enough to buy for himself a cheap black suit, a rolled-gold chain, and a 'diamond' that looked magnificent in the night-time."

The audience smiled again. It was an intelligent audience —

an audience that could put two and two together. Besides, it was growing interested in the little man's recital.

"The morning after his purchase had been made, and hidden where his wife would never find it, Ethan went off to work with a happy heart. Marie had given him a small sum of money to purchase some wine for Tommy, who was growing stronger every day, the twins had just recovered from an attack of the measles, and the baby was cutting his teeth good-naturedly. If all went well that night, he would slip into his 'evening' clothes, make the rounds of the theatres, and —— Arrived at the department store, he swaggered into the building as if he owned it.

"But suspicious eyes were watching his every move, and his very joyousness proved his downfall. Some goods had been stolen, the night before, from Ethan's counter — with Ethan's collusion, the company believed — and to all appearances, as the company's detective very sagaciously observed, the little man was trying to brazen it out. Ethan was hurried into the managerial presence, and, of course, protested his innocence.

"But he was condemned in advance. A web of circumstantial evidence was woven about him by the industrious detective, who had to detect somebody, and all his statements were discredited. 'How did he manage to support a family of eight on eight dollars a week?' Ethan shook his head for reply — they had better ask that question of Marie. The floor-walker and the detective favored immediate arrest and prosecution, but the 'firm,' more merciful, discharged him without a 'character,' and cautioned him never to do it again.

"Ethan wandered aimlessly about, uncertain what to do or where to go. The sunlight hurt his eyes; the street-traffic confused him; and he couldn't — he simply couldn't — tell Marie. Why did people look at him so curiously, so meaningly? He dodged in and out of deserted thoroughfares, and longed for night to come that he might go home.

"Home! What kind of a home could he provide for his loved ones in the future? What could he do — a man without a character? He thrust his hands into his pockets and discovered the money Marie had given him to purchase wine for Tommy. How she had managed to save it was a mystery.

"Ethan felt a lump rise in his throat as he thought of his first-born son, so frail, so delicate. How often his wife and he had denied themselves, telling the children they were not hungry, so that they might get little things for Tommy; and now —— What would become of his boy?" A tear rolled down the speaker's cheek and fell unheeded, but it was not unnoticed by the audience.

"When Ethan arrived home that night, Marie was away, and he felt like a prisoner reprieved — time enough to tell the evil tidings in the morning. He went quietly upstairs, put on his newly purchased suit of black, and, unobserved by the children, slipped out again into the street.

"He hurried along in the glare of the street-lights, thinking of his disgrace. Passers-by paused and looked at him, and when he caught their glances, looked away again. He surveyed himself critically in a store window. But always uppermost in his mind was the thought that he had been discharged without a 'character.' He turned a corner, and went with a crowd that surged into the entrance of a theatre.

"The next thing he remembered, he was seated at a table calling for wine. A waiter took his order, poured him out a glass, and for several minutes he sat like a man in a dream, the wine untasted before him. Mechanically, as the waiter still hovered about his chair, he thrust his hand into his pocket — and remembered his boy. He paid the waiter, but poured the wine back again into the bottle and replaced the cork. He could have wept at the thought of his own unworthiness.

"Then someone behind him exclaimed: 'It's amateur night;' and the next moment he had thrust the bottle of wine into his pocket, and was out of his seat and on his way to the entrance to the stage. There was a dearth of amateurs that night, and he was welcome.

"But when he beheld the crowd that packed the big theatre from pit to gallery ——"

The little man hesitated, smiled quaintly, and the audience found the smile infectious. He thrust an arm behind his back and produced a bottle, and a ripple of hand-clapping swept over the house, but he checked it with a gesture. "Wait!" he said. "There are a few more words to add:

"Across the street from the humble dwelling of the Dales, there lives a man who abuses his family."

The audience grew hushed again.

"He has congenial employment, good wages, short hours of labor, steady work; but he deserts his wife and children for weeks together, leaving them to be supported by the charity of the neighbors."

The speaker paused impressively, then continued:

"Three times he has been arrested for cruelty, but on each occasion he has escaped punishment because his wife refuses to testify against him.

"Last week, after a more prolonged absence than usual, he returned to his home in the early hours of the morning, dragged his wife from her bed, and inflicted such injuries upon her that she will be an invalid for life."

Beads of perspiration started out upon the forehead of the trombonist. His face grew ashy pale; his hands shook violently. It was plain to be seen that he was laboring under intense excitement.

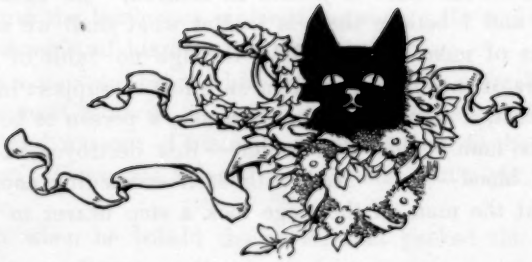
The pale little man in the ill-fitting suit of black walked slowly across the stage till he was directly opposite the trombonist, and every eye in the audience followed his movements. Then, he stopped.

"They tell me there is justice in Heaven," he exclaimed devoutly; "and I believe there is! But what shall we say of the judgments of men. Ethan Dale, through no fault of his own, after years of unremitting toil in an effort to support his family, is an outcast, a man without a character, a person to be avoided; while this man — this wife-beater — this destroyer of his own flesh and blood ——" And with each succeeding count in the indictment the man on the stage took a step nearer to the trombonist.

But the conscience-stricken musician waited to hear no more. He gave one terrified glance behind him, seized his instrument, and bolted through the door beneath the stage. "Stop him," a youngster shouted from the gallery, and the voice of the boy in the silence of the theatre sounded like the crack of a whip. Then the applause began.

In less time than it takes to relate, the audience was on its feet, a shouting, cheering, gesticulating mob; and the speaker realized that he had done the thing he had wanted to do all his life, and had done it well. He bowed to right and left, to the galleries, to the boxes, to the rows and rows of flushed, perspiring faces — and still the clamor grew. It rose in waves of vibrant sound to a steady, thunderous roar, that rocked the building and followed him behind the scenes and into the presence of the stage director. "Twenty dollars a night and a month's engagement," the latter shouted in his ear, and thrust him out upon the stage again.

That night, for the first time in his life, but not the last, and because he was in a hurry to tell the good news to Marie, Ethan Dale, the amateur, the man without a "character," the discharged employee of the Golden Rule Department Store, rode home in a cab.



Her Heart's Desire.*

BY ELEANOR SEELEYE.

THE hillside, yellow with gorse, sloped gently downward for some distance, then apparently ceased to exist, its golden edge meeting sharply, as far as eye could reach, the robin's-egg blue of the sky. A gigantic knife could have cut no more definite line. The wind was still, the noon sunshine intense. Little ripples of heat trembled up into the ether, bearing with them the fragrance of gorse and grass, and the good clean scent of the earth. It was a world to itself — what might lie beyond its serene expanse, unless otherwise known, could only be conjectured.

Near the centre of the slope — the one interruption to its even glow — cropped out a black ledge of rock, forming at this moment a background for the figures of a young man and a girl. The first was quite of the sailor type, — athletic yet lounging, with skin fair beneath its tan, eyes twinkling easily, regular features and brown hair. Trenalva was well acquainted with Will Breckan, had known him from his babyhood, in fact, and had little good to say of him except when he was in a boat — all admitted his superiority there. As for Jennifer Tregwyn, — Trenalva knew her too, and summed her up tersely as a "fule," not idiotic but incurably stupid. Her presence on the moor this day with Will Breckan was a proof of Trenalva's astuteness. That she was good to look at as well as foolish, probably accounted for Breckan's presence. The beauty of youth was hers to perfection. Her pretty figure was a rounded one; her pretty face was round, with dimpled cheeks and a charmingly curved chin; while, to complete the picture, her blue eyes, at the present moment opened widely, were fixed upon her lover with a look of unmistakable adoration.

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"Father says I'm a fool to have any dealings with you, Will; and it's like I am, — only — "

"Only? — "

"O Will, I can't help it, — I do so love you!"

A flush overspread the young man's face, then retreating left him pale through his bronze. His voice deepened with emotion:

"My girl, God knows why you love me, — *I* don't! I've treated you shameful, that's the truth. Another girl would knife me; but you, — you — damned if you don't love me just the same! He hesitated, halted, began again:

"Jennifer, you trusted me once, and I went off without word or sign. You trusted me twice, and I left you at the church door for all Trenalva to stare at. And yet, in spite of all, you're trusting me again. You're a good woman, Jenny, — too good for me — but I'll right you before the world. God curse me forever if I fail you now!"

"Will dear, — O Will, don't feel it so! You had reason, I'm sure, to leave me. I was that silly, — they all say it, and it must be true, — how could you be sure? You just waited. The others don't know you as I do. I didn't blame you."

"That's what hurts. You never blamed me, and though I held you up to shame, you trust me still."

Jenny's sole answer was to rest her head against his arm, with a mute, half-childish confidence whose appeal went straight to his heart. Thus they rested for some time, and one of the two, at least, felt the stormy waves of his nature subsiding into calm. Meanwhile the warm peace of the moor was unbroken; rather, it was accentuated by the drowsy hum of bees above the gorse, and by a deeper, though harmonious, murmur that seemed to rise from the blue depths beyond. Presently, as the sound grew more distinct, the young man half unconsciously gave ear to it — the sailor in him caught its message, even in the midst of his joy.

"Tide's turned," said he regretfully; "time for us to be going, Jenny." They rose together. Putting a hand beneath her chin, he turned towards him her delicately tinted face with its babyish curves and dimples: — "You know what *I* am, Jenny, and you know what a dreary place I'll have to take you to. Do you think you can bear it?"

"You've no need to ask that, Will Breckan," she began with some dignity, — but the next moment threw her arms impetuously round his neck:

"O Will, Will," she cried, "I'm the happiest girl in Trenalva!"

Little more was said as they walked away. Speech was usurped by the rising flood of remorseful affection in the one, in the other by the full rapture of love that at last met love. Quietly, therefore, hand in hand they threaded their way across the slope, towards the meeting line of blue and gold. Fuller, more penetrating, grew that deep undertone heard more faintly above, and soon between the paler blue of the horizon and the golden-yellow of the hillside intervened a band of intensest sapphire, — the sparkling, palpitating plain of the sea.

A few steps more, and the hill ended abruptly in an almost perpendicular cliff, with the insurgent tide beating sonorously at its base. Full two hundred feet below lay a narrow strip of beach, uncovered at low tide though just now hidden, and only to be reached by a breakneck footpath down the face of the cliff. At low tide also might be seen black jagged spits of basaltic rock, running far out to sea, and forming a saw-tooth bottom over which many a ship had raked inland to its doom. It was, in fact, because of three recent wrecks in as many days, that a station for coastguards had been established on Pennick Head, just across the combe, and Will Breckan placed in charge.

The lovers had come to this point for a glance at their future home, but Will had business elsewhere, and their stay was brief. Retracing their steps therefore, they soon reached the crest of the hill, where Trenalva village came in sight, nestling dark among its wind-blown trees. At this point they parted, — Jennifer returning home, and Will going on to Boscombe, five miles farther down the coast. They parted as those part who expect to meet again, with love and without apprehension. A wave of the hand from Will, an answering wave from Jennifer, and the two passed from each other's sight.

Jenny walked slowly down the village street, swinging the long ribbons of her hat, and beaming with almost vacuous content on those she met. One and another nodded greeting, one or two

spoke, and all gazed after her as she passed, exchanging comments with their neighbors.

"Time's set for Sunday," said old Mrs. Feefy; — "dost think it will come off?"

"Not if the man is Will Breckan!" responded her husband. "A fule, ain't she now, to make a third app'intment arter two's fell through?"

"Jennifer hasn't right sense," commented Mary Somerby, Jennifer's cousin and whilom playmate. "If she were marrying to save her good name, I could understand it, — 'twould be nat'ral then to hang on. But that ain't it — it's just that she is in love with Will Breckan. She as good as says, — 'I dote on ye. I'll lie down, an' you can walk over me.'"

"Needn't mind about taking your shoes off, neither," supplemented Mrs. Somerby's unmarried sister, with a disdainful toss of her pretty head. "If ever *I* let a man treat me like that, you'll know it!"

The old shoemaker had his comment, too, though, manlike, it was kinder to the lass than lad. "I'd never take him if I was Jennifer, — not arter all that's passed. But she was always softhearted, poor thing! Much too good for Will, — not that he's so bad someways, neither. And I reckon," he added, addressing a customer, "I reckon she may have a chance of him this time, for I hear Parson says 'tis true. Besides, Dan Polpethy carried Jennifer's duds to the guardhouse yesterday, an' that looks like marriage, — sure it does."

"I'll believe it," said the customer, "when I sees it, not afore. Why, last year the day was set, an' Jennifer stood up before the parson. *She* was there all right, but Will, — *he* didn't come! An' why didn't he? *I* never could see. Jennifer's fair fulish about him, but she's a good lass and a pretty; an' he couldn't 'a' done better. Some gear too, though her folks held back, they say, when it came to parting with it."

"Ay, trust 'em for that! Jennifer overpersuaded herself the first time, I do think. The moment she set eyes on him it was all over with her; a baby could 'a' seen how it was. But Will wa'n't in love, so they say. He was just taking his fun where he could get it, an' I don't think he realized the lass was such a fule.

So he'd offer her his arm, an' she'd take it an' hold on tight. He'd tell her how pretty she was, and it sounded to her like how pretty *he* thought she was. Light come, light go, with all the Breckans. And presently Will was off to sea without any good-byes, an' there was Jenny left standing."

"Ay, but the second time, — how do ye explain that?"

"I don't explain it. But I've heard say that when Will got back, the men chaffed him about his sweetheartin'; they told him that Jenny had got more sense since he saw her last, an' wouldn't take up with him no more. An' they do say that Will bet 'em a glass all round that she'd believe him same as ever. — An' so she did, poor lass! an' so she did! An' the day was set, an' Jenny waited in the church till the last minute the law allowed; but he never come anear."

"How did she take it? Sure, it was mortal hard lines for a young un like she."

"You may well say that. How she felt I can't tell ye; most folks say she's too silly for feelin's. But I can tell you what she said. When it was plain at last that he wouldn't be there, she never changed color nor looked flustered; she just smiled round at the folks an' said in that soft little voice of hers, 'I reckon Will's forgotten; I reckon I'd best go home.'"

"An' had he forgot?"

"Not he! He waited at the Mitre till the lads came back from church, an' that night he was roarin' drunk. It was nigh on two weeks afore he got over it; then he went right off to Cardiff, and only got back last month."

"And is he trying the same trick again?"

"Looks like it," said the shoemaker, with a short grunt of disapproval, "but I don't know no more."

Perhaps this was the kindest comment on Jennifer in all Trenalva. Her own people at least were much harsher, both in judgment and speech, and her mother was harshest of all.

"Where'st been?" demanded the latter, surveying her daughter grimly as she entered the house.

Jennifer took off her hat and stood twirling its ribbons as she answered, "On the hill."

"With Will Breckan?"

"An' why not, mother? It's settled now. We'll be man and wife in two days more."

"Thou be'st a fule! Man and wife? Maybe; — but if the man is Will Breckan, the wife'll ne'er be thee. Hastna learned thy lesson yet?"

"Mother, don't be so hard on Will and me. He didn't do right before, but we've settled that between us, and it sure needn't worry thee if it doesn't worry me."

"I've no patience with'e, Jennifer, I say it plain. Thy 'settling' made us a laughing-stock afore, an' I doubt but 'twill do it again. We'll go to the church with 'e this once more; but if the same thing happens as happened last time, thou needstn't come home; we've had enough o' thy weddin's!"

"Ay," grumbled the father from the bench where he sat with his pipe, "thy mother's in the right of it. But I'll say this; give that low-lived fellow the sack, an' let him wait in the church for naught, as thou didst afore him, — then our door's still open to thee as to the rest."

"He'll not be there to wait!" saucily announced Jenny's younger sister. "And if he was, Jen wouldn't leave her Willy, Willy," chanted the yet younger son of the house.

Jennifer looked from one to the other with that queer immobility of expression which, among other things, led people to think her stupid; and still twirled her ribbons as she said gently, "Let be, father dear; please let-a-be, till Sunday anyhow. Will is better than you think. Oh," — with more approach to emotion than she had yet shown, — "Why can't ye let-a-be?" and turning quickly, left the room.

The slow intervening hours passed by — how, she could not have told — and the morning came at last when Jennifer, dressed in the bridal white worn once before, and escorted by unwilling relatives, took her way over the mile of moorland between Trenalva and its church. There had been high wind the previous night, with dashes of rain, and the day was more gray than bright, — a tint in harmony with the circumstances, but nevertheless of evil omen. Pretty nearly all the village was in attendance, for curiosity had reached its acutest pitch. Would there be a marriage? Would there be no marriage? Those who know

everything said that Parson Renfrew had talked very seriously to Breckan, and had told him that if he failed this day to behave like an honest man, Trenalva would be too hot to hold him. And indeed it is more than likely that Mr. Renfrew, whose plain speaking was notable, used his wonted plainness on this occasion.

On the whole, public opinion leaned to the side of no marriage; although, with the odd bias against meekness which so generally contravenes that beatitude, public sympathy reached out beforehand to Will — ("a man nat'rally don't like to have a hussy so bent on him!") — and public justice prejudged that "if he left her, 'twould sarve her but right."

Jennifer, however, heeded none of these things — at least she seemed unaware of them. She walked along composedly, lifting carefully her white skirts from any obstructing bramble, looking straight ahead, with peaceful eyes and a face whose tranquillity never varied.

The church stood on a headland, overlooking the sea, which often in time of storm sent its spindrift flying over the ancient building. Those who reared it in old days must have placed it on this wind-swept, storm-racked height to serve as a landmark for passing ships. Nowhere along the coast was the wind more violent than here. The very slabs in the churchyard, where they had not already fallen flat, had been braced against its force — and two or three scraggy trees, near the church door, were bent nearly double from the blast. It was a lonely shrine, not unbefitting the generations of sea-and-cragsmen whom it had beaconed towards homes transitory or eternal.

Just as the party reached the porch the sun, previously obscured, shouldered his liberal way through the clouds to pour down a flood of golden light. Each lichened stone caught the glow, the dull line of the sea began to sparkle; the very dead beneath their slabs must have felt its vital warmth strike through! There was something almost theatrical in the display, — ill-advised, too gaudy for the occasion. Nature really has no sympathy — we translate her by our own moods into sympathetic joy or sorrow — but, in actual fact, we are shattered on the rocks of her impassivity. For this once she had shown herself as she is. And yet — so strangely are we built — of all who attended the wed-

ding, there was probably none but the bride-elect who felt the incongruity. While others grew more cheerful in response to the "good omen," she for the first time looked uneasy. "It ain't befitting," she would have said, had she framed her thought.

In the midst, then, of this cruel illumination, the party entered the church. The service was set for eleven, and it still lacked ten minutes of the hour. Promptly at the time appointed Mr. Renfrew came out of the vestry and took his place. The ten minutes passed, another ten and yet another. By this time there was such silence in the building as Trenalva had never known. A light breath seemed loud, the fall of a pin on the stone floor nerve-shivering. When, after the lapse of a half hour, Mr. Renfrew beckoned to the sexton, the audience as one man gave a nervous start.

The sexton took his orders and went out. Almost immediately returning he said in an audible whisper, "He hain't nowhere in sight, sir." Ten minutes more, then Renfrew spoke again, addressing himself this time to the bride's father: "Do you think, Tregwyn, we should wait any longer?" He spoke quite evenly, not looking at Jennifer.

"As my fule of a darter wishes!" replied Tregwyn grimly. All eyes were focused on that daughter, each ear was tense to catch her words.

"It ain't noon yet, is it, Mr. Renfrew, sir?" she said in that expressionless little voice of hers, with the same faint, unmeaning smile that seemed stamped upon her features.

Again they waited, in silence momentarily more tragic. The sunlight, as if all at once aware of impropriety, retired with startling suddenness; at the same instant a keen wind from the sea shrilled round the church, bringing with it a deathlike chill. The waiting people shivered and the bride grew pale. In the presence of the climax all had apprehended they were nevertheless unprepared to meet it.

At last the clergyman closed his book—gently, yet with finality—and gazing at Jennifer compassionately said: "My friends, I fear there is something wrong. We will wait no longer to-day. May God in His mercy be with us all! Let us now go home."

Only a moment before they had been eager to leave; now that the words of dismissal were spoken, no one stirred. The air was charged with emotion, — volcanic forces were at work beneath the quiet, almost stoical demeanor of the shamed bride. Slowly, very slowly she turned, confronting by turns her own family, the jeering bridesmaid, long frightened past a jeer, the lately harsh or inquisitive neighbors, now awed to silence. From one familiar face to another her gaze traveled and then returned to the clergyman. Was there in it a hint of appeal? He must have thought so, for he took a step forward, as if in answer. He did not take another. Her uplifted countenance bore the imprint of a passion so tremendous that pity, even sympathy, was powerless.

"Stand there!" she said in tones as harsh as breaking metal, "you'll not go yet. You came to see me married! Good riddance 'twas to some, and folly for a fool to others. Ay, didst ever see a greater fool? Look at me well! Here's a woman that believed a man was true, that put behind her the fleers of her neighbors and the cold hearts o' them as brought her into the world, an' thought even she might be happy."

Renfrew tried to interrupt, but she silenced him imperiously: "Nay, sir, 'tis *my* hour now — all the more that the bridegroom is lacking!" She looked around her haughtily: "Neighbors, if Will Breckan stood beside me, you'd be all smiles and greetings. 'Twould be Jennifer here and Will there, an' who so proud to see us home! *Home!* My God! What other home have I? Come sir," — to Renfrew — "give me your arm. We'll lead the way, if you please. Come you next," — to her family. "Neighbors, fall in behind!"

So overmastering was her mood that none dared oppose, — like children they fell into line. Renfrew alone kept some power of volition; but even he, after brief indecision, silently offered his arm. It seemed to him that her wits were shattered, and that by humoring her now he might prevent worse.

Stranger procession never set forth. The clergyman's urbane, sympathetic features contrasting with Jennifer's proudly lifted head and impassive face, the dazed escort, the funereal slowness and silence of the train, — yes, a funeral it was, no wedding!

Once more the sky was overcast, and the damp breeze was still

more penetrating as they passed out of the churchyard through the old lych-gate, and turned their faces towards Pennick Head. The path, — a series of ascents and descents, — wound in and out; now turning inland, now following the cliff line, but well guarded all the way save at one point only, where the sea had stabbed deeply into the land with a long, narrow rift, known locally as "The Devil's Finger." No ferns grew on its precipitous sides, sunlight never warmed its depths. It showed always black water, with oily gleams peering up from below, if one had courage to approach its edge or even glance down from the light bridge that spanned the rift.

It was at this point precisely, as the procession reached the height of the hill, that a group of men became visible, stooping over a prostrate something which their movements now and then half revealed. Not a man but knew the import of that scene. Moved as by simultaneous impulse they quickened their steps — they ran. But, rapid as they were, Jennifer outstripped them. With a cry that rang long in the listeners' ears, she thrust aside their detaining hands, parted by sheer force the huddling group, and caught to her heart the stiffened form that a few hours before was Will Breckan. It was all that life had left her.

The men instinctively bared their heads, and stepped a little aside. Standing thus apart, Renfrew questioned and they answered in undertones. They had no idea how it happened. All they knew was that, on their way to the wedding, — their voices sank yet lower, — they had seen something floating in the Rift. With infinite difficulty, aided by ropes, they had managed to get him out. Yes, stone-dead — no hope at all. There was a ribbon round his neck, with a ring, —

"*What?* Say that again!" The voice, unnaturally strained, was Jennifer's. She had risen to her feet, and was regarding them with a gaze so compound of love and anguish that the rough sailor who had spoken choked, and handed her in silence the ring attached to its discolored band. She fingered it softly, with a vague smile. The women around her began to sob, and one young girl quietly fainted on her mother's shoulder.

It was Renfrew who, at this juncture, with his wonted good sense, relieved the tension, and took command of the situation.

"Jennifer," said he in kind, clear tones, "God has given us this chance to do justice to the dead. I fully believe that this is your ring, and that Will was on his way to you when he met his death. But let all be equally convinced."

He had struck the right chord. Sense and resolution came back to the poor girl's face. Eagerly she extended to him the ring, which he, carefully examining, held up for a moment to the people before reading its inscription aloud: "Will to Jennifer," — here followed the date, — "until death do us part." The erring lad had kept his word, and righted her before the world. "A better man might have done worse," thought Renfrew, handing back the ring. To his surprise she made no move to take it; instead, she looked at him with piteous intensity.

"Mr. Renfrew, isn't it true that in the sight of God Will and I are man and wife?"

"My child, I truly believe so."

"Then parson, dear, say the words. Oh, do'e say the words, an' make me Will's wife in the sight of men! It's all I care for now, — it's my right. O parson, give me my right!"

"Jenny, thou'rt mazed!" cried her mother. "Mr. Renfrew, the lass don't know what her's a-sayin'." She might as well have spoken to the surge. "Make me his wife!" still Jennifer implored; "ah, do'e, do'e say the words!"

The rough coastmen strangled their sobs; the women, too awed for hysteria, grew white. For the time being their little world contained three figures only, — Renfrew, visibly troubled, poor, passion-tossed Jennifer, and the rigid form at her feet.

There was a long, tense pause. "I cannot — " began Renfrew at last, then stopped short. How deny to this hapless girl the one boon she craved of God or man, the sole assurance for her peace on earth, — it might well be of her faith in Heaven! Yet how — ?" He looked at her once more, and his decision was taken. It might be uncanonical, but that must lie between him and his God.

Never before had he so moved these people, never would he so move them again as now, when with assured, clear voice he began: "Dearly beloved, we are gathered here together in the presence of the living and the dead — ;" instinctively, reverently, all sank

to their knees. From Jennifer's face the look of agonized entreaty faded; wrapped in wonderful peace she knelt beside the dead, clasping in warm palms his lifeless hand.

"In the day of joy," proceeded Renfrew, "and in the day of sorrow; for better and for worse, until death do them part!"

"With this ring I thee wed," — unasked, the sailor who had discovered it here placed it on her hand. "And, knowing the intention of the dead, the purpose of the living, — so far as mortal man may, in the presence of these witnesses and of all-seeing God, I pronounce you man and wife!"

Very sweetly, even a little shyly, Jennifer bent over the dead and solemnly kissed his brow. It was her act of consecration. A murmur like a sob was heard from the kneeling throng, evoked by the heart-breaking, poignant sweetness of this simple act. Shyly still, yet with new-born dignity, she rose to her feet and faced the witnesses.

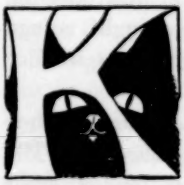
"Mr. Renfrew, sir, I thank you," she said; "you have given me my heart's desire. Neighbors, we both thank you for your presence; we take it most kindly of you. And now, will you help me take my husband home?"

Slowly, with many a pause for breath, they bore the bridegroom up the hill, the bride keeping beside him, opened the door of the coastguard house and placed him on his bed. Then softly they closed the door, and left the two together.

Jennifer's marriage caused little after-comment, and — fortunately, perhaps, for Renfrew — still less criticism. If on this occasion his theology had failed him, he could console himself by reflecting that only the letter killeth, — the spirit giveth life. If he had broken the canonical law, he at least had obeyed the higher law; he had given peace to a sad heart and a shattered life. But Trenalva was in no mood for criticism. Stirred to the very depths by that hour's storm and stress, it ended by taking Jennifer to its heart of hearts. She who had been its fool was now become its saint!

Kooli.*

BY F. W. LUENING.



OOLI looked out upon the surging crowds and wondered in a vague way at their gaiety. Not that he cared much. That gnawing, burning ache that seemed to start at his big, flat toes and run to the tip of his rat-like tail had killed all that was curious — all that was life — that was in him. So he just swayed uncertainly as he shifted the weight of his huge bulk from side to side and trumpeted in dull agony — as he had been taught to do — when he felt the sting of the goad and heard the sharp, guttural commands of The Little Brown Man beneath him. He raised his trunk swiftly as The Little Brown Man drove sharply and slyly into its tender end, and backed away into the darkest corner with a bellow of pain and terror and swayed again — in sheer weakness. What did it all mean? Sometimes he wondered dully. He did not understand. Why was he goaded daily into a desperate agony and made to roar in pain. He who desired only peace — only to be let alone?

He did not know that over the papier-mâché rocks that formed his pen hung a sign:

> KOOLI! MOST FEROCIOUS ROGUE ELEPHANT IN CAPTIVITY!
> *Admission 10c.*

As he looked sadly out, he could see the long, irregular street of tinsel and paper and paint and the crowds that surged and played in the glare of the myriad electric lights. He could see the laughing faces of pretty women, the gray uniforms of the chair-boys, the plodding camels as they passed on noiseless feet across his range of vision and, giving the crowd a color brilliant and strange, gathered there from every corner of the globe —

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Chinese girls, dark skinned Arabs, Hindoo Fakirs, Russian Officers, dainty French flower girls, swarthy Turks and Malay sailors. And above the din of tin trumpets, shuffling feet and muffled screams he could hear the voice of The Little Brown Man as he shrieked to the crowds of the ferocities of "Kooli the Terror of Mysterious Asia." And every now and again The Little Brown Man would come and prod the sensitive trunk end and beat the sore toe nails till Kooli trumpeted in agony and sought refuge in the dark corner; while those who came looked on in wonder or awe or disgust — as intelligence dictated.

Months ago — ages ago it seemed — Kooli had come. They had toiled together, he pushing the beams into place while The Little Brown Man cursed shrilly and jabbed him in tender places with the goad. And when the evening came The Little Brown Man threw him an armful of mouldy hay, over the price of which he had haggled for hours. Thus it was that Kooli helped to build the prison in which he was to suffer.

He bore it all with dull patience and, as the crowds came night after night, and the goad pricked sharp, grew thinner, gaunter, more awful to look upon. It hardly required the artful shading about the eyes which The Little Brown Man produced with white lead to make him look the half-crazed Rogue whose part he played. Sometimes, in the lonely hours of the night, when the moon shone in at the bars of his hopeless tomb, it showed the solitary figure of Kooli restlessly swaying from side to side. But it could not show the pain that, starting at the bruised trunktip would rise slowly up till the great gray head seemed full of burning coals that flashed and flickered and glowed till they flared up and burst amid exquisite agony. Then, slowly, would come a procession of palms, broad rivers, grassy plains — primeval forests. And always there was a huge bull elephant, superb of tusk, immense of muscle, who moved through the vistas of green — a lord — fierce, lonely, unconquerable. And the bull would reach for tufts of the succulent green above him and at the touch of his trunk the palms would wither and dry and fall to his feet — a bunch of mouldy hay. Kooli knew that the bull was Kooli whose throat was parched and burning, and who longed for just one little, little bite of that fresh, elusive green. Knew that it was

Kooli, yet was not Kooli, and would ponder upon these strange, mixed conditions of things till all went out in flashes and bursts of flame again. And of recent nights the great lone bull under the palms seemed seeking something. When Kooli's brain grew hot and the pictures came, he could see that. The bull would tramp through the forests, peering into the gloom and lashing himself into a wild fury — and always there was something missing in the picture.

Tonight they streamed in to see Kooli. The Little Brown Man was in ecstasy. He goaded slyly. When Kooli bellowed in pain he dissembled beautifully — wariness, courage, sudden half fear. He advanced, commanded, backed away quickly and prodded when he could. Altogether he was elated. The dimes came fast, the fraud went on, and Kooli suffered miserably.

The burning ache grew dull. The people before him vanished. Bright lights flashed before his eyes and went out, leaving him in darkness. Then a faint glow, coming out of the distance, advanced slowly toward him. Gently its soft rays showed him the primeval forests. He saw the lone bull. A tremor shook his frame. He *was* the lone bull. His tusks ! How white, how sharp they were. And his muscles ! What strength was there — what power. He reached up and tore great tufts from the palms above him. They did not change and become mouldy hay now. He advanced, swaying from side to side, trampling ruthlessly the matted underbrush about him. And was it pain that rent him and caused him to tremble from trunk to tail? Pain ! It was rage. Blind, unreasoning rage, and he sent bellow upon bellow into the forests about him. Not the quavering trumpet of terror now, but the harsh, fierce crash of anger. He was seeking something — seeking — seeking. Through the tangled growth he saw the twinkle of a fire. Near it crouched the figure of a man. A little brown man who held in one frail hand an elephant goad. And Kooli knew what he sought. A single step covered the miles between them. Kooli trumpeted again in wild fury. He dashed the brown body to the earth, fell forward, crushing the bones under his great knees, and ground the wriggling Thing beneath him into the dust till the forests vanished slowly away and left to him only a quivering mass of human flesh.

But he was mad. Fever mad, with the smell of blood, and with hunger and pain. His little pig eyes took on a steely, vacant stare. He charged the papier-mâché rocks of his prison. Together with the planking behind them they crashed, and Kooli burst out upon the Tinsel Street. Here were Men — countless numbers of Men — and he was hunting Man tonight. He picked them up as they fled before him, hurling them right and left. Lights, myriads of them, twinkled and angered him, and he charged again and again. Castles, mountains, forests — booths and side-shows — collapsed as he battered their flimsy frames. In wild, glad abandon he tossed about him plaster statues, paper rocks, chairs, tables, wooden Indians, Chinese idols, Indian pottery, yards of painted canvas and sections of tinsel-covered buildings and booths.

Then a revolver cracked, and as Kooli wheeled something pinged into his side. He saw red stripes on a uniform of blue, and he thought of blood, and knew again what he sought. So he crushed out the life with his foot and charged on. A ten-foot paling smashed like glass, and Kooli found himself in darkness. Dimly he saw before him two long, straight, shining rails, that spread across the country and dipped into a hollow in the distance. He lumbered rapidly forward. A light approached. He roared in frenzy and charged once more.

Big Bill was making time. The Limited was late.

"See anything ahead, Jack?" he asked of his fireman suddenly.

"My God! Load o' hay! Stop 'er!"

"Load o' hay, hell!" gasped Bill as he reversed.

The engine shrieked, rose straight up and skidded into the ditch on her side, dragging her long line of sleepers with her — a mass of hissing steam, flames, and writhing humanity. And the gaunt, emaciated body of an elephant lay underneath.

The Testimony of the Rose.*

BY MARY FOOTE ARNOLD.

ALTHOUGH Anthony Vane was on his way to Rosecourt for the purpose of asking Mr. Windell's consent to his marriage with Esther, he was not hopeful of his success. In the dark ages — before he had known Esther — he would scarcely have chosen Mr. Windell for a father-in-law; he now found himself devising ways and means whereby he might induce him to assume that responsibility. That Mr. Windell was a hard man with an uncertain temper was one thing; that these failings would very likely be noticeable in his attitude toward himself was quite another. He regretted particularly the stand he had taken, some two years before, in opposition to a political measure in which the older man had been interested. Not that Vane's opinions about the measure in question had changed any, only that — Ira Windell never forgave.

There was just the shadow of a possibility that Esther's father might receive the news of their engagement in a reasonable spirit. If, for instance, Vane should happen upon him when a certain rose on which he had been experimenting had reached perfection, or at a time when his enthusiasm had been aroused by some new and beautiful variety of the rose family — *then,* if Vane should have wit enough to say the right thing, about the right rose, at exactly the right moment, Mr. Windell's usually adamantine heart might soften toward him. In such an event, Vane assured himself, he would ask the all-important question, be given a favorable answer and the paternal blessing at one and the same time (he hoped) and hasten to Esther with the glad tidings, before the old gentleman should recover himself.

For Mr. Windell was quite a different person when he was among his roses in conservatory or garden. It was said of him

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that he cursed his enemies, insulted his friends, tolerated his wife and daughter, and loved his roses. Certain it is, he cared for his roses with a tenderness which he bestowed on no other thing living, and spoke of them by name as if they were indeed sentient beings. Nervous persons of the neighborhood, who from time to time had overheard him addressing his roses in terms of endearment, described their sensations as being weird in the extreme.

Having crossed the field which lay between his shooting lodge and the main highway, Vane now came out upon the open road where, some rods toward the east, the chimneys of Rosecourt thrust themselves upward into the blue air. In the opposite direction, faintly outlined in the distance, he discerned a figure in white. Hoping that it might be Esther, he waited until, the figure drawing nearer, he saw that it was Isabel Nyx, the mass of wild flowers with which her arms were loaded making an effective setting for her brilliant, laughing face. Isabel Nyx was Mr. Windell's ward, who made her home at Rosecourt. She was an accomplished young woman, and was greatly admired by the young fellows of the neighborhood, Vane being one of the few who had not succumbed to her fascinations. To his mind her dark southern beauty could not compare with Esther's clear gray eyes and delicate bloom. Just now, especially, he would much rather have gone on his way alone; as it was, he relieved Isabel of a part of her burden and they walked the rest of the distance to Rosecourt together, chatting pleasantly as they went.

As they turned into the avenue which led to the main entrance, a groom on horseback dashed past them, evidently bent on an errand of importance. As he plunged into the roadway he shouted back to them: "Mr. Windell has been shot!"

With one accord the two on the avenue broke into a run, leaving a trail of wild flowers in their wake. By the time they reached the house Isabel was sobbing hysterically. They found the members of the household gathered in the library where, prostrate on the floor, the blood oozing from a wound in his breast, lay the master of Rosecourt. The doctor leaned over him, administering a stimulant; Mrs. Windell, supported by Esther, knelt at his feet, crying softly; back of them stood the women servants, some of them whimpering, all of them pale and frightened.

Even during the stress of that hour, Vane found himself contrasting the behavior of Isabel with that of Esther, to the advantage of the latter. For while Isabel, who had her place beside Mrs. Windell, continued to sob convulsively, Esther retained her self-control, exerting herself to the utmost to soothe her mother, though her eyes showed traces of recent tears.

A long, tense moment went by, second by second. Then the stricken man opened his eyes, his expression indicating that his mind was clear. He lay quiet for a time, his gaze centered upon a rose, an American Beauty, which, mangled almost beyond recognition, still clung to the lapel of his coat, where he had fastened it before the fatal bullet had torn its way through rose and flesh.

"Beauty! Rose-child! We are going away — together," he murmured brokenly.

His eyes next sought the group of weeping women at his feet, and his lips curled into their habitual sneer. There was an almost imperceptible stir among the women; he seemed about to speak, but did not.

Then, slowly, his glance came around to Vane who, kneeling beside him, assisted the doctor. He seemed to accept Vane's presence there quite as a matter of course.

"You'll — marry — her — now — I suppose — Anthony, — so I — may — as well — give — my consent," he gasped.

Vane took into his own the hand which was feeling its way among the scattered rose petals. "I thank you," he said.

Again the dying man spoke, making one supreme effort.

"She who did this will betray herself — through a rose. I see her — plucking a rose — like this. She sends it to you — Anthony — by another. It — is — the token — of her guilt."

Then Ira Windell died.

An official investigation into the causes which led to the tragedy brought to light certain facts concerning Esther Windell's movements during the hour which immediately preceded her father's death, but the evidence being circumstantial, as well as contradictory, no decisive steps were taken by the authorities. Esther herself told how she had gone into the library that morning with the purpose of preparing her father for the interview with her lover, Anthony Vane, which she knew was to take place at a later hour.

She did not attempt to conceal the fact that her father had become furious at the mere suggestion of her engagement, and that he had spoken insultingly of Mr. Vane. A gardener, who had been working on the lawn outside at the time, heard Mr. Windell declare:

"If you marry Anthony Vane it will be after I am dead!"

Esther had gone from the library to her room on the floor above, crying; she was seen by the housemaid, and also by Isabel Nyx, who met her on the stairs as she, Isabel, descended them when about to start on her walk in quest of wild flowers.

About ten minutes after Isabel had left the house — according to the gardener, who saw her go down the avenue and turn into the road — a shot was heard coming from the direction of the library. Esther was the first to enter the library afterward. The cook testified that her hand was on the knob when she, herself, arrived upon the scene, and that from her position she might have been either opening or closing the door.

Mr. Windell had been found lying upon the floor, shot through the left lung, no other person being in the room with him. A revolver with one chamber empty was on his desk, which stood some twelve feet from where he had fallen, thus doing away with the theory that the shot was self-inflicted. That the revolver thus found was the property of Esther, it having been given to her by Anthony Vane for target practice the previous month, was considered important evidence by those investigating the crime. Esther explained that she had voluntarily relinquished the revolver to her father some days before, as he disapproved of target shooting for young women. Her mother corroborated this statement. Esther declared, further, that she had not seen the weapon from that time until after the shooting, nor had she known what her father had done with it.

The movements of each person connected with the household, previous to the crime, were made the subject of rigid inquiry. It was found that others beside his daughter had reason to resent Mr. Windell's treatment of them. He and the gardener had had a falling out the previous day; that very morning he had scored the cook for the quality of the coffee which she was serving him, dubbing it slop; Isabel Nyx had quarreled with him about money matters within the week; and it was hinted that the death of her

husband would prove a happy release for Mrs. Windell. Thus matters rested for a time, the officers of the law pursuing such clews as seemed worthy of investigation.

About this time Anthony Vane began to think himself a much abused man. For Esther not only failed to avail herself of her father's dying consent to their marriage, but insisted on severing their engagement, forbidding her lover to come to Rosecourt until the time when her innocence should have been fully established. In vain he tried to convince her that together they could work more effectually in tracing the real perpetrator of the crime. Nor did the constant reiteration of his own belief in her innocence help matters. She remained firm in her position, and Vane was forced to acquiesce. He stayed on at the lodge indefinitely, and did some ferreting on his own account, though with no results.

Yet Esther did not quite sever the tie which bound them, for each morning a messenger from Rosecourt delivered into Vane's own hand a single rose — an American Beauty. At parting Esther had told him that she should continue to send the roses until the superstitious gossip concerning her father's last words had died out; she believed them to be but delirious ravings.

One Sunday morning, some three months after Mr. Windell's death, Mr. Thomas Perkins — familiarly known as Tom — after a season abroad, descended upon the lodge and proceeded to make himself comfortable.

"Knew you'd be glad to see me, old man, so didn't wire," he remarked as he took his place at the breakfast table. "Thought a little country quiet would be soothing to my nerves after the turmoil of Paris; lots to do in Paris — lots of pictures and that sort of thing; lots of pretty girls, too. Got any around here?"

"Ye-es," admitted Vane, cautiously.

"How many? 'Fess up, Tony, good for the soul," persisted Tom, noting the flush that was creeping about the ears of his host.

"One," answered Vane, promptly.

"And her name is ——?"

"Her name is her own — until she changes it for mine. Now, if you please, we'll talk about Italy." Vane's tone was final.

That afternoon Tom elected to stay at the lodge and take a nap, while Vane went in his motor car to a neighboring city to pay his

usual Sunday visit to his mother. Returning at nine o'clock that evening, Vane was told by his man, Parker, that Mr. Perkins had gone for a walk. A few minutes later, as Vane was disposing of a lunch and a cold bottle, which the faithful Parker had set out for him, Tom sauntered in, a cigar between his lips and a red rose in his buttonhole.

"I've found out who your mysterious beauty is," he announced triumphantly. "That's one on you! Her name is Isabel Nyx."

"Her name is *not* Isabel Nyx."

"Not! Then why roses — and messages?" Tom took the rose from his buttonhole and tossed it across the table to Vane. "You shock me, Tony, you do, truly! Miss Nyx said to tell you ——"

"What?" interposed Vane sharply.

"Softly, old boy! She said to tell you that the rose meant all that Mr. Win — Win ——"

"Windell," prompted Vane.

"That's it, Windell. It meant all that Windell — confound him — said that it would mean."

"Tom," said Vane earnestly, "cut the nonsense and tell me exactly what has happened. It may mean a great deal to me."

"Certainly, old fellow, if you feel that way about it. Well, I went out for a smoke; came across a little chapel; heard singing; went in — don't know why — just did. Blooming beauty across the aisle; black hair, adorable mouth, heavenly chin, white dress, American Beauty in her belt; white lace scarf arrangement over her hair — stunning effect. Stared at her most of the time. Couldn't get her to look at me though — read her prayer book every minute, don't you know!

"Well, when I got outside, there she was up the road a little, waiting — yessir, waiting for me. I snatched off my hat and salaamed. Saw her eyes then, way into the back of 'em. Reminded me of that Mona Lisa thing that — what's-his-name — painted. Old Italian master —."

"Go on!" thundered Vane.

"'Are you staying at the lodge with Mr. Vane?' she asked, her voice as soft as silk.

"'I am,' said I, in the best English I could muster.

"'Then I shall ask a favor of you.' She took the rose from

her belt and gave it to me. 'Tell Mr. Vane that Isabel Nyx sends him this rose, and that it means all that Mr. Windell said that it would mean.' Then she was off down the road, before I could ask to see her home. That's how it comes that I'm the bearer of a love token to another man. Unique experience, I assure you."

Tom helped himself to beer.

"You say that she was alone and walking?" asked Vane.

"Alone and walking — I, also, was alone and walking," replied Tom gloomily.

"But, man, Rosecourt is five miles from the chapel!"

"Can't help it; what I've said, I've said. It's now up to you, Tony my boy, to tell me what you mean by these hysterics."

Vane told him.

"Somebody is fooling you, Tony, sure as fate. I say, let us go to Rosecourt as quickly as possible and nail the lie on the head. Where's the car? Maybe we'll overtake the lady."

The car with the two men in it was soon pounding down the road, Vane driving, Tom carefully shielding the rose. They did not overtake Isabel, however. When they reached Rosecourt they found Mrs. Windell and Esther sitting on the piazza, the light from the hall lamp throwing their figures into relief.

"I have come to see Isabel," explained Vane not stopping for introductions.

"She is asleep in the hammock," said Mrs. Windell, indicating a shadowy corner of the piazza. "I'll call her."

There was a murmur of voices. Presently Isabel came forward into the light to where the two men stood. She was dressed in white; her hair and the lace scarf, which still draped it, were slightly disarranged as if from contact with the hammock.

"By George! It's the same girl!" breathed Tom into Vane's ear.

"This is an unexpected pleasure," said Isabel cordially, putting out her hand to Vane.

Vane did not take her hand. "I received the rose and your message, Isabel," said he.

She put her hand to her belt, then hastily took it away again.

"I don't know what you mean," said she easily.

"I mean that I received this rose which you sent me by my

friend here, Mr. Perkins, whom you saw outside the chapel this evening." Vane held the rose out to her, but as she made no motion to take it from him, he let it fall to the floor, its petals scattering in every direction.

Isabel laughed. "That is a very clever fiction. Your friend, Mr. Perkins, whom I have not had the pleasure of meeting, by the by, must have a wonderful imagination to have invented it. I have not been to the chapel this evening, nor have I sent you a rose. I have been in the hammock ever since supper time, as Mrs. Windell and Esther can tell you."

"That is true, Anthony — there is a mistake somewhere," said Mrs. Windell, vaguely troubled.

"And I am absolutely certain that she has been *asleep* all the evening. I know because I thought it rather mean of her to monopolize the hammock," said Esther with a lightness that she was far from feeling.

"Come, Miss Nyx," urged Tom coaxingly, "at least acknowledge that you were in the road near the chapel this evening between eight and nine, and that you saw me there. I told Tony all the time that somebody was trying to play a trick on him. Own up that you're fairly caught."

"Really, Mr. Perkins, you are very amusing. If any one has been guilty of perpetrating a joke this evening, I am not that one. I certainly should not joke on a subject which is associated with recollections so painful as the one to which, I presume, you allude — Mr. Windell's last words. Perhaps you, yourself, are addicted to that sort of pleasantry, Mr. Perkins? Can it be that you are now paying one of those election bets of which one hears?"

"You wore a rose at your belt this evening," persisted Tom.

"I often have them about me. If I did, it is in the hammock — or somewhere. It does not follow, necessarily, that a rose which I may have worn and the one on the floor here are identical. There are roses — and roses."

Isabel swept them a courtesy. "Good night!" said she saucily over her shoulder. At the foot of the stairway she paused.

"Mr. Perkins, the next time you tell a fairy story to Mr. Vane you must make the different parts of your plot hang together better. If you don't, it won't be any good."

The four persons left on the piazza discussed the situation in low tones. None of them professed to understand it. Tom punctuated the talk with questions that nobody could answer.

"If it wasn't Miss Nyx, who was it?"

"How did she know that I was at the lodge, anyhow?"

"If she didn't know it, who did?"

"Who gave me the rose? that's the question."

"She had a rose fastened in her belt tonight, I noticed it particularly," volunteered Mrs. Windell.

A light was brought and the hammock and piazza around it were searched, but the missing rose was not to be found.

Early the next morning Tom was awakened by the persistent clamor of the telephone bell. He stumbled out of bed, groping for the receiver.

"Hello!"

"Is this Mr. Perkins?" came over the wire in low vibrant tones.

"It is."

"This is Isabel Nyx. Mr. Perkins, I am going to ask another favor of you."

"The deuce you are — er — charmed, I'm sure."

"Yes. I want you to tell Mr. Vane that I've just written a letter to him. That's all." The connection was shut off.

Vane now appeared with a light, having been aroused by the commotion.

"This time she wants me to tell you that she has written a letter to you! Does she think that I'm a wandering gazoo, or does she not?" demanded Tom fiercely.

It was now four o'clock. Vane went to the telephone and called "central."

"Give me Rosecourt; don't know the number."

"Rosecourt hasn't a telephone."

"Then give me the person who called me a moment ago."

"Nobody called — wire must be crossed."

"Thought as much," said Vane, hanging up the receiver.

So varied had been their experiences during the night that the two men were scarcely surprised when a messenger from Rosecourt came, shortly before six o'clock, bringing the news that

Isabel was dead. Later, Mrs. Windell handed Vane a sealed letter found in Isabel's desk, addressed to him. It ran as follows:

> The truth about Mr. Windell's death is this: That morning, after I had started on my walk, I went back to the house again. The gardener, by that time, was behind a hedge, so that he did not see me. I went into the library to see if I could not find out from Mr. Windell what Esther had been crying about. Sometimes he told things when he was angry. He did this time. More than that, he taunted me with — yes, with caring for a man who loved another. He had stumbled on my secret in some way, and now he flung it in my face, heaping insult upon insult.
>
> I always hated him! Now, my reason had fled. A drawer in his desk stood open; in it a pistol, ready to my hand. I seized it and fired. He fell. Then I jumped out of the window opening at the back of the library, closed the shutters behind me, and ran through the grape arbor to the lane, which runs parallel with the road in front. No one saw me. All the people in the house had been attracted in another direction — to the library. By walking fast I got quite a distance from the house in a short time. After that I went more leisurely. I picked a lot of flowers, and finally crossed over to the road, where I met you, which I thought was quite providential.
>
> I cried when Mr. Windell was dying, because I was afraid he would tell, not because I was sorry.
>
> Ever since then I've been afraid to touch a rose. Last night I nerved myself to it, and put a "Beauty" in my belt. Then I went to sleep in the hammock with my hand on the rose. It was gone when Mrs. Windell awakened me, after you came. I don't know how it got to your friend, unless my soul took it to him. Our souls can do anything, I've heard. If mine is going to act in this way, I may as well give up, first as last.
>
> Now, I am going to drink something out of a bottle which I have been keeping for this emergency. It will put me to sleep, and when I awaken I hope that I shall be in a different world from this one.
>
> ISABEL.

Mrs. Windell had slept with Isabel that night, the girl alleging that the insufferable rudeness of that Mr. Perkins had made her nervous. The elder lady had scarcely closed her eyes during the earlier part of the night, on account of Isabel's restlessness. Between three and four o'clock she got up and made a light, explaining to Mrs. Windell that she wanted to write a letter. She sat at her desk writing for some little time. Then, putting out the light she went back to bed, and lay so quietly that Mrs. Windell, exhausted by the events of the night, herself went to sleep. When she awoke, shortly after five, she found Isabel dead beside her.

An Incident at the Morehead.*

BY D. W. BEDINGER.

REACHING the Morehead coal-mine from the outside world is accomplished by leaving the train at the little village of McKee and driving at right angles to the railroad five miles up a rocky ravine called "Buckles' Hollow." After going this distance the ravine spreads out and forms a basin wherein are the company store, office, miners' houses and drift mouth of the Morehead Mine.

A quarter of a mile farther on the ravine comes to an abrupt end, and though it is practicable to continue in the same direction on foot, it is impossible to ride or drive farther.

The Morehead Mine presents a very unusual appearance, for although there is every equipment of a modern mine for the digging of coal, there is no visible means of transporting it to the market.

In truth, although the Morehead produces five hundred tons of coal a day, not one bushel of it is ever hauled down Buckles' Hollow. The low, flat electric motors come out of one black hole in the mountain side, drawing after them long trains of little mine cars loaded with coal. Then, instead of leaving them at a tipple to be dumped into railroad cars, they simply cross the hollow on a low bridge and disappear in another black hole like the one from which they came.

It seemed highly ridiculous even to me, unaccustomed to the mining country.

"George," I said to the youthful superintendent of the Morehead, "it must be very unprofitable to take coal out of one mountain side and put it in another."

"Oh, no," he said, laughing, "we are storing it away for the winter."

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Then he gave me the true explanation. In Jones Mountain, which is directly opposite the mouth of the Morehead, is located the Silver Creek Mine. This has its loading tipple over in the Silver Creek valley on the other side of the mountain. The K. L. & N. Railroad built a spur up Silver Creek to the mouth of the mine to transport the coal to market. A few years later the Morehead Company prepared to open their mine, but the railroad company refused to build in Buckles' Hollow, claiming that the expense of the unusual amount of grading and bridge building would not be justified. The directors of the Morehead Company were prepared to close the mine, when a happy thought came to one of them that perhaps the Silver Creek Company would permit them to run the Morehead coal through the mountain and out their entry to the Silver Creek Railroad spur.

This was finally accomplished. Every day five hundred tons of coal disappeared into one side of Jones Mountain and was dumped into railroad cars on the other side.

About a year before the time of this story, the Silver Creek Company suspended operations, but the Morehead continued to run its coal through the deserted mine to the railroad.

I was spending my vacation with an old college chum, George Martin, who was the superintendent at the Morehead.

One day, after he had taken me through the mine, and while we were sitting in the office enjoying what George called a "civilized smoke," from a box of cigars I had brought from Cincinnati, he suddenly said to me: "I forgot to tell you, Ned, that my mare, Linnie, has developed into a regular circus performer."

"Indeed," I said. "What does she do? Ring the bell and count handkerchiefs?"

"Not quite as bad as that," he answered. "I've known how to make her shake hands and stand up on her hind legs, for a long time; but to top it all, this morning when I started to mount to ride to McKee she kneeled down and put her nose to the ground as if she wanted to say her prayers. I think she must have been in the ring at some time in her career."

"That kneeling business is very convenient, if she will do it at the right time," I said, "so easy to get on and off, that even a lazy man like——"

"That's just the trouble — you never can tell when she's going to do anything," he replied.

Before I could answer, my attention was attracted by a horseman galloping at full speed up the hollow toward us.

However, he did not stop at the office but passed out of sight toward the head of the ravine.

"I wonder what in the deuce he is up to?" ejaculated George. "I've a notion to get on Linnie and follow him, just to see."

I remembered the abrupt ending of the ravine. "I guess he will not go very far in that direction," I said, "and we can hold him up when he comes back."

Thirty minutes later we heard the clatter of hoofs and rushed to the door, expecting to see our man returning from the head of the ravine. Instead there came another horseman, galloping up the hollow.

"Well, this one will not get by so easily," George said, stepping out into the road.

His action was unnecessary, for the rider suddenly drew his horse to its haunches before us.

"Hey, did you fellers see a man on a gray hoss?" he shouted.

"What do you want to know that for?" said George, quietly, for in the mountains it is not always best to know too much.

"Young feller," cried the man, getting red in the face, "I'm the Sheriff of this county and that man is a fugitive. Did you see him or not?"

"Yes, we saw him pass here half an hour ago."

"Then it's all up for me!" said the sheriff in a voice of despair. "He's out of the head of the hollow by this time, and he'll get up the ridge into Pennsylvania before I can possibly make up the distance."

"What did he do?" I asked.

"He shot two deputies who was arrestin' him for hoss-stealin'," answered the man. "I've been chasin' him for two days and there's three thousand dollars reward for him, dead or alive."

"How far is it to the state line, George?" I asked.

"Five miles."

"If I'd 'a' gone up Silver Creek 'stead o' followin' him up the Hollow," said the Sheriff, "I might 'a' rid up to Powell and

headed him off there, but I was so close I thought sure I'd catch him 'fore he got this far."

Powell is the little village just on the West Virginia side of the state line. There's a road from McKee to Powell by way of Silver Creek. Whether purposely or not the fugitive had trapped the Sheriff in Buckles' Hollow and taken his chances on foot to get over the ridge and out of the state.

"It looks like you are up against it, old man," said George, sympathetically.

"It ain't that I care for the money, but to think o' that devil escapin' me when I was almost in sight o' him as we passed McKee," answered the sheriff mournfully.

"George," I cried, "cannot he go through the tunnel and still have time to ride to Powell before the man can walk there?"

"By Gum! I hadn't thought of that!" cried the sheriff, brightening up, but in a moment his face fell.

"No use," said George, "there isn't a horse within three miles of the tipple over on the creek, and he cannot take a horse through a 48-inch tunnel."

"But a mule," I said, "surely one of those little mine mules will carry him."

Again he shook his head. "We have not a mule on the place that is low enough to go through that tunnel."

We looked at each other in silence for a moment. It was surely hard luck for the sheriff, and I sympathized with him.

Suddenly George shut one eye and gave a long whistle. Then he cleared his throat as he always does when he is going to talk business, and turned to the sheriff.

"Mr. Sheriff," he said, "what will you give us to help you get that man and the reward?"

"I'll certainly give ye a hundred dollars apiece if it would be of any use," he answered. "But it's too late. So there's no use talking about it."

"A hundred dollars apiece?" exclaimed George, laughing. "You are not talking business at all, Mr. Sheriff. Now, if you'll be reasonable in the terms, we may be able to do something yet."

There was something in his voice that brought the officer out of his brooding with a start.

"If you can do anything, boy, then for Heaven's sake spit her out quick," he cried. "Don't waste time disputin' about a few dollars. It may mean the capture of a criminal. How much do you want?"

"Suppose we make it an equal divide between the three of us," answered George, without the quiver of an eyelash. "That would make a thousand apiece."

For an instant the sheriff stood dumfounded, as though he did not understand, and then he began to swear.

George looked at the man with a smile. "What do you say about it?"

It was the sheriff's last hope, and he realized it.

"Have it your own way, then," he said, sullenly, after exhausting his stock of profanity.

"Ned," cried George, "reduce this agreement to writing and get his honor's signature while I get things started," and away he rushed to the stable.

"Bill," he called to a man standing near by, "run out the big motor and one of those flat trucks. Hitch on a mine car, too."

In less time than it takes to tell it, I had the signature of Nehemiah Brown, Sheriff of Spencer County, West Virginia, to a paper binding him to deliver two thousand dollars to George and myself in case he captured the fugitive and received the reward.

Hastening to the drift mouth we found George with his mare standing beside a low, flat car used for hauling the cutting machines in the mine. This and an ordinary mine car were attached to a motor.

"Come, Linnie," said George, and gingerly she stepped upon the flat car, the platform of which stood barely a foot above the rail.

"Good girl," said George, patting her on the neck, "lie down," but Linnie did not move. He tapped her forelegs with the whip, but her response was to rear up and nearly fall off the car.

I could see George getting red in the face and losing his self-possession. His plan was evident, and my heart fell as it seemed that it would be a failure.

A crowd of miners had gathered and were enjoying the spectacle of George's discomfiture.